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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000465

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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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TAGS: PGOV KDEM NI

SUBJECT: MADUEKWE: PDP WILL WIN IN APRIL

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Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Ojo Maduekwe says that the Presidential contest is a "two-horse race" between Governor Yar'Adua and General Buhari and "barring any extraordinary eventuality" the PDP will win. He characterized the Nigerian opposition as "dysfunctional" and pledged that the ruling party will continue to democratize itself, press for economic reforms, and deepen the anti-corruption battle. Maduekwe confirmed that President Obasanjo will become the Chairman of the PDP Board of Trustees upon his retirement, and that in this new role he will continue to help guide Nigeria. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Ambassador and visiting AF/W Director Phillip Carter met with the National Secretary of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Ojo Maduekwe, on February 27. The Embassy had requested a meeting with PDP presidential candidate Umaru Yar'Adua, but he was attending a funeral in Katsina and campaigning in the Southeast and therefore unavailable.

Two-Horse Presidential Contest

¶3. (C) Chief Maduekwe opined that the presidential contest has become a "two-horse race" between PDP and ANPP, as Vice President Atiku Abubakar has been effectively sidelined by his legal troubles. He believes that "barring any extraordinary eventuality, the PDP will win." Maduekwe called the opposition "dysfunctional" and complained that the PDP "still does not have the opposition that we deserve." He admitted that he had some respect for General Buhari, calling him a "fairly decent person," but said Buhari had also been a big disappointment. He was particularly critical of Buhari's pronouncement that the election has been "rigged in advance."

"Buhari knows he will lose, and is trying to delegitimize the PDP's victory," says Maduekwe. Despite this, Maduekwe opined that it was good for Nigeria that Buhari was in the race, as opposition to the PDP helps to raise important issues. Chief Maduekwe complained bitterly about Atiku, saying that the VP's refusal to resign showed a "moral lacking." If Atiku has so many complaints about the PDP and the President, Maduekwe asked, how can he remain in office?

¶4. (U) Both Maduekwe and PDP National Campaign Chairman Bode

George (with whom we met briefly while waiting for Maduekwe) agreed that the PDP had no interest in a presidential debate with Buhari or any other candidates. George contended that only "the elites" would watch a debate on television. He also noted that Governor Yar'Adua and Governor Jonathan hold an "interactive session" each night while they are on the campaign trail to meet with local party members and answer questions.

PDP Reforms Will Continue

15. (C) When asked to cite PDP accomplishments over the past eight years, Maduekwe said that the PDP has become more issue-based, there is more internal party democracy, and the party has established a "leadership bond" which all its candidates had to sign. The bond pledges them to respect both the Nigerian constitution and PDP manifesto, and to behave in certain ways. According to Maduekwe, the PDP has moved beyond just "saying the right things," and will continue to work on democratizing itself, reforming Nigeria's economy, and fighting corruption. He worried, however, that an "undemocratic temperament persists in both the government and opposition."

16. (C) Chief Maduekwe characterized the PDP as a "laboratory of ideas" and said that the party must press the next administration to continue to implement its ideas and reforms. He noted that Minister of Education Obi Ezekwasili has undertaken major efforts, but that the party needs to "own her reforms" to ensure that they continue after her tenure in office. Maduekwe himself created a "master plan for transportation" when he was Minister during Obasanjo's first term, but complained that until recently, there had been no follow-up on this master plan by his successors. He asserted that the PDP needs to appoint technocrat ministers

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who will continue to implement the party's platform.

17. (C) Carter asked what would be different in a new PDP administration, since the party has already had 8 years in power and challenges remain. Maduekwe responded that the fight on corruption began under Obasanjo, but in many ways it stopped in Abuja. He acknowledged that there were too few achievements against corruption at the state and local level. He also noted that federal cabinet meetings have been "democratized," but that many state governments are still "behaving like war lords." He intimated that re-electing the PDP would give the party a chance to deepen its reforms to the state and local level. He said that the PDP needs to build ethical leadership and mobilize against corrupt state officials. Maduekwe said that his vision is of a PDP that is "transformational, not merely transactional," a party which uses its "overwhelming majority to transform Nigeria morally, politically, and economically."

Obasanjo's Retirement Role

18. (C) Chief Maduekwe admitted that there are genuine concerns in some quarters about the role President Obasanjo will play in the PDP after leaving office. Maduekwe said that even his critics admit that "President Obasanjo loves Nigeria," and said that the party needs to tap into Obasanjo's vast experience to continue to help guide the country. He explained that in Nigeria, there are no private sector organizations or NGOs equivalent to the Carter Center or the Clinton Foundation which might be an appropriate outlet for a former leader. The PDP decided that an ex-President such as Obasanjo has the clout to guide the party, and when needed to speak to an incumbent (PDP) President on important issues to ensure that the new President stays in line with his party's platform.

CAMPBELL